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AUTHOR Ogletree, Earl J.: Rameriz, Lester
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ABSTRACT

Much of the research on the racial attitudes of young children suggests that black or dark skin color elicits negative attitudes, while white skin color is embraced by all children regardless of their skin color. The authors sought to determine if Puerto Rican children exhibited similar ethnic identification and color preference characteristics. Twenty-five Puerto Rican first graders in a public school were surveyed using two tests. The Color Test consisted of two uncolored drawings of faces. The children were asked to color one drawing the skin color they were, and the second the way that they would like to be. The Picture Test included two sets of colored pictures of girls and boys: one depicted light skin children and the other dark skin children. The subjects were asked to select the group they would like to play with and to explain their choices. The findings showed that the subjects were aware of and preferred their own skin color. The skin color of the children in the Picture Test influenced the subjects' playmate choice. The authors concluded that although the children identified with and were aware of their skin color, they appeared to have poor self images.
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PUERTO RICAN CHILDREN'S RACE AWARENESS

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by
Earl J. Ogletree
&
Lester Rameriz

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Racial or ethnic awareness and identication are an integral part of the growing up process of children. By the age of two years children begin to develop racial awareness and differences based on skin color and physical features. The stages of racial identity and attitudes are: 1) awareness of self and others, 2) acquisition of race-related vocabulary, concepts and values, and 3) formation of emergent and terminal racial attitudes.

Much of the research on the racial attitudes of young children suggests that black/dark skin color elicits negative responses, white being embraced by all children regardless of their skin color or race. This is subtantiated by Stabler and Johnson's (9) study that black objects elicit negative responses and white positive reponses. Clark and Clark (2) had obtained similar results with black children using skin color preference coloring and doll tests. Stevenson and Stewart (10) and Ogletree (7 & 8) found that Black children preferred light or white skinned children over dark skinned children.

Similar findings were found with Mexican children. Separate studies by Durret and Davey (3) and Teplin (12) showed Mexican children selected Anglo dolls and photographs over those of their own ethnic group. Suarez (11) and Negrete (6) both found that pre-school and kindergarten Mexican children were aware of their skin color, but 70% and 60% preferred white skin color.

The findings suggest that dark-skin and minority children are "out-group"oriented, away from their racial/ethnic group. No research has been done on the ethnic awareness and skin color preference of Puerto Rican children.

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Problem

To determine if Puerto Rican children exhibited similar ethnic identification and skin color preference characteristics, the writers surveyed twenty-five puerto Rican first graders in Chicago public school. The 15 girls and 10 boys had attended a bilingual kindergarten.

Procedures

The children were given a color test consisting of two uncolored drawings of the faces of boy and girl. Each child had a 16 color crayon box. The children were asked to color the faces the skin color they were, and to color the second drawings the skin color they would like to be.

The Picture Test included two sets of colored picture of Puerto Rican boys and girls. One picture depicted light-skin children, the other dark skin children. They were asked to select the group of children (light or dark skin) they would like to play with at home and in school. Following the administration of the tests, the children were asked to explain their responses. The testing was conducted by a Puerto Rican teacher.

Results

The findings show the majority of children were aware of their own skin color andpreferred their own skin color. However the skin color of the children (light or dark) influenced their identification with andpreference for a particular skin color.

Table I shows the responses to "Color the child's face the color you are."

TABLE I

RESULTS TO COLOR THE FACE THE COLOR YOU ARE

SKIN COLOR IDENTIFICATION

N = 25

Sex	Light	Medium	Dark
Boys			
Light (1)	10% (1)		
Medium (5)	20% (2)	30% (3)	
Dark (4)	20% (2)	20% (2)	
Girls			
Light (5)	33% (5)		
Medium (5)		33% (5)	
Dark (5)		7% (1)	26% (4)
Total N = 25	40% (10)	44% (11)	16% (4)

( ) = Number

Table I shows that 40 percent of all students chose a light color, 44 percent chose a medium skin color, and 16 percent chose dark skin color. From the ten boys, five (50%) chose light skin color, five (50%) chose medium skin color, and none chose dark color. From the fifteen girls, five (33%) chose light skin color, six chose medium skin color,

and four (26%) chose dark skin color. It can be interpreted that more boys than girls rejected their own skin color.

The findings show also that 18 students (72%) identified correctly with their own skin color, while 12 students rejected their own skin color.

Forty percent of the boys chose the correct skin color, while 60 percent of the boys rejected their own skin color. From the 100 percent medium skin color boys 60 percent (3) chose the correct skin color, while 40 percent (2) rejected their skin color. All the 100 percent dark skin color boys rejected their skin color. The one light skin color boy chose light skin color.

Ninety-three percent of the girls chose the correct skin color while 6 percent rejected their own skin color. One hundred percent medium skin color girls identified with their skin color and 100 percent light skin color girls identified with their own skin color. Of the 100 percent dark skin color girls, 80 percent identified with the correct skin color while 20 percent identified with a medium color.

Comparing the boys and girls responses it was found that 93 percent of the girls identified with their own skin color while only 40 percent of the boys identified with their own skin color. More boys (60%) than girls (7%) identified themselves incorrectly.

The findings of Table I showed that the subjects are

aware of their skin color. All light skin color children identified correctly with their own skin color. From the medium skin color children more girls than boys identified with their own skin color. From the dark skin color children more boys than girls rejected their own skin color.

Table II shows the responses to "Color the child's face the color you want to be."

Table II

RESULTS TO COLOR THE FACE THE COLOR YOU WANT TO BE

SKIN COLOR PREFERENCE

N = 25

Sex	Light	Medium	Dark	Bizarre
Boys				
Light (1)	10% (1)			
Medium (5)	20% (2)	20% (2)	10% (1)	
Dark (5)	10% (1)		20% (2)	10% (1)
Girls				
Light (5)	33% (5)			
Medium (5)	13% (5)	13% (2)	6% (1)	
Dark (5)	26% (4)		6% (1)	
Total N = 25	60% (15)	16% (4)	20% (5)	4% (1)

( ) = Number

Table II showed that 60 percent of the students preferred light color, 16 percent preferred medium color, 20 percent

preferred dark color, and 4 percent preferred a bizarre color (green). Forty percent of the boys preferred light color, 20 percent preferred medium color, 30 percent preferred dark color, and 10 percent preferred a bizarre color. Seventy-three percent of the girls preferred light color, 13 percent preferred a medium color, 13 percent preferred dark color, and none preferred a bizarre color. The findings shoed that more girls than boys preferred light color.

The results showed also that of the sample, 13 children (52%) preferred their own skin color, 11 children (44%) preferred another color, and one child (4%) preferred a bizarre color.

Fifty percent of the boys preferred their own skin color, 40 percent of the boys preferred another color, and oneboy (10%) preferred a bizarre color. All the light skin color boys (100%) chose their own skin color. From the 100 percent of the medium skin color boys, 40 percent selected their own skin color, 40 percent preferred light skin color, and 20 percent prferred dark skin color. From the 100 percent dark skin color boys, 50 percent preferred their own skin color, 25 percent chose light skin color, and 25 percent chose a bizarre color.

Fifty-three percent of the girls preferred their own skin color, 46 percent selected another color, and none chose a bizarre color.

Table III shows the responses to the photographs of Puerto Rican children of light and dark skin color.

TABLE III

RESULTS OF CHILDREN SELECTION
OF LIGHT AND DARK SKIN CHILDREN
AS FRIENDS

TYPES OF RESPONSES

N = 25

Sex	Light Skin	Dark Skin
Boys		
Light (1)		10% (1)
Medium (5)	50% (5)	
Dark (4)	30% (3)	10% (1)
Girls		
Light (5)	33% (5)	
Medium (5)	20% (3)	13% (2)
Dark (5)	26% (4)	6% (1)
N= 25	80% (20)	20% (5)

N = ( )

Table III show that 80 percent of the students selected as friends the light skin children and 20 percent of the students chose dark skin children as friends. Eighty- percent of the boys chose the light skin children as friends and 20 percent selected the dark skin children as friends.

The same results were found for the girls.

All the light skin color boys chose the dark color group of children as friends. All of the 100 percent medium skin color boys favored the light skin color group. From the dark skin color boys, 75 percent chose the light skin color group and 25 percent selected the cark skin color group.

One hundred percent of light skin color girls chose the light skin color group. Sixty percent of medium skin color girls chose the light skin color group and 40 percent favored the dark skin color group, and 80 percent of dark skin color girls chose the light skin color group while 20 percent preferred the dark skin color group.

Comparing the responses of boys and girls it was found that the same percentage (80%) of boys and girls chose the light skin color group as friends and that the same percentage (20%) of boys and girls chose the dark skin color group of children as friends.

The findings of Table III showed that both girls and boys preferred the light skin color group of children as friends.

Table IV shows the responses to which set or group of children they should invite home to play.

TABLE IV

RESULTS OF CHILDREN SELECTIONS OF LIGHT AND DARK SKIN COLOR CHILDREN AS PLAYMATES

	TYPE OF RESPONSES					
	N= 25					
Sex	Light Skin		Dark Skin		No Preference	
Boys						
Light	(1)	10% (1)				
Medium	(5)	50% (5)				
Dark	(4)	30% (3)			10%	(1)
Girls						
Light	(5)	33% (5)				
Medium	(5)	26% (4)	6%	(1)		
Dark	(5)	26% (4)	6%	(1)		
N=25		88% (22)	8%	(2)	4%	(1)

N= ( )

Table IV shows that 88 percent of the sample preferred the lights skin color group as playmates, 8 percent preferred the dark skin color group, and 4 percent had no preference. Ninety percent of the boys selected the light skin color group, none preferred the dark skin color group, and 10 percent had no preferences. Eighty-six percent of the

girls chose the light skin color group, 14 percent chose the dark skin color group, and none had preference for neither group.

All of the light skin color boys chose the light skin color group as playmates, while 100 percent of medium skin color boys chose the light skin color group. 75 percent of dark skin color boys chose the light skin color group and 25 percent made no preference.

All the light skin color girls chose the light skin color group as playmated. Eighty percent of medium skin color girls chose the light skin color group and 20 percent chose the dark skin color group. Eighty percent of the dark skin color group chose the light skin color group and 20 percent chose the dark group.

Comparing the responses of boys and girls it was found that more boys (90%) than girls (85%) preferred the light skin color group as playmates. Fourteen percent of the girls preferred the dark skin color group while none of the boys chose the dark skin color group.

In both Tables III and IV the findings showed that the greater majority of the students chose the light skin color group of children as friends as well as playmates.

Following both the Color Test and the Picture Test the investigator asked the children why they made a particular selection. Almost all the children gave a spontaneous answer.

In the first coloring test (identification) the subjects answered the following:

"That's my skin color;" (peach)

"That's my color;" (yellow)

"Because, I'm white;" (white)

"I'm white, that's my color;" (white)

In the second coloring test (preference) the subjects answered the following:

"I like to be yellow, that's my favorite color;"

"I want to be white;"

"That's a person's skin color;" (peach)

"That's my favorite color;" (brown)

"Because I like it, it is beautiful;" (brown)

Comments on Picture Tests were as follows. Those who chose the light skin color group said.

"They are good;"

"They are beautiful;"

"They are white;"

"They are good friends;"

Those who selected dark skin color group commented:

"They know how to play;"

"I want to play with them;"

"They are beautiful, they are good;"

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that the subjects are aware of their skin color and that the majority identified themselves with their skin color. However more boys than girls rejected their own skin color. On the other hand the majority of the subjects preferred the light skin color children in the pictures. Combining the results of the the Color Test and the Picture Test, it can be concluded that the subjects, although they identified with and are aware of their skin color, appear to have a "poor self-images". This was particularly evident in the Picture Test when the majority of the students preferred the light skin color group of children as friends as well as playmates instead of choosing the dark skin color group. This conclusion was also supported when a small percentage of the dark skin color children chose the dark skin color group as friends and as playmates and identified themselves with and preferred light skin color instead of dark skin color.

The finding support the results of similar studies. It suggests a type of ambivalence towards self that can be attributed tothe relative lower status given to the minority group by society. The children have assimilated the reflective attitudes and racial values of the majority culture. Betances sums it up best:

> Puerto Rican children in the United States feel very confused about their identity as it relates to the issues of race and color The psychological trauma expeienced by second generation Ricans is caused by conflicting definitions that place Puerto Ricans in a "no man's land," niether black nor white. This crisis causes ambivalence, anxiety and bitterness which often turns against the self (1:7)

In addition, Puerto Rican parents born in Puerto Rica have historically experienced whiteness as good, blackness as bad. It is passed on to their mainland-born children. Although toward there appears to be a trend/pluralism or ethnic relevancy, it has not erased the overt and covert discrimination and prejudice. Persons of different skin color or physical characteristics bear even a heavier burden which effects the development of a positive self image by the children.

Parents and teachers can help children to cope with the issues of race and skin color. Parents can develop their children's self concept and not communicate derogatory attitudes about their group's racial status and other groups in society. They should encourage friendship with children of other ethnic groups. Teachers can help children to understand and appreciate the people and life styles of other cultures.

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